

To members of the Energy & Technology committee,

Climate change is a growing threat to our planet. It is important that local, state and federal governments do all that they can to mitigate the threat that faces us. We are writing to you at this time to express concern over the fact that the state of Connecticut is not on track to meeting its climate goals. Restrictions limiting the growth of solar energy as a contributor to our electric grid are part of the problem.

The bill - SB 176 - which will be brought forward for discussion on March 3 - does not go far enough in expanding the opportunity for solar in our state. We are writing in support of SB 176, An Act Concerning Shared Clean Energy Facilities (SCEF), but would like to see some changes to make it less restrictive on the overall growth of solar energy in the state.

The proposed expansion of the shared solar program which benefits lower- and middle-income residents is a step in the right direction, but the current proposed increase of the cap on SCEF from 25 MW to 35 MW is too small in proportion to the climate crisis we face. We urge you to increase the SCEF cap to 50 MW of new solar per year.

Additionally, we urge you to also increase the cap on commercial solar from 50 MW to 100 MW of new solar per year. An added benefit of allowing the expansion of commercial solar on rooftops is the provision of additional sustainable green energy without needing to put solar panels in fields and green spaces that can better be used for other purposes (leisure, farming, forests to further decarbonize). A study by the Coalition for Sustainable Solar Regulation estimated that doubling the cap on solar expansion would have a minimal impact on consumer bills - averaging just 17 cents per month.

Unless these caps are lifted, the growth in the proportion of energy that can be provided by solar is far too small to begin to make a dent towards decarbonization of the electric sector in the state.

As for the provision in SB176 to allow Eversource to own shared solar facilities, that might be appropriate in some cases. The rules of such a program need to be clarified and set by PURA with stakeholder involvement.

Please expand the reach of this important bill by increasing the caps on SCEF and commercial solar expansion.

Sincerely,

Erica & David Berthiaume
Portland, Connecticut
March 1, 2022